

CD 2005--73/74

FACULTY *of* MUSIC



2005-2006

WHERE GREAT MUSIC MEETS GREAT MINDS

Friday, December 9, 2005
7:30 pm. MacMillan Theatre

University of Toronto
Faculty of Music
presents

University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra
Raffi Armenian, conductor

PROGRAM

Jackie Shin

Gui-Chun for Orchestra
Student composition competition winner

Robert Kurka
1921-1957

Concerto for Marimba, Op. 34
Allegro molto
Adagio espressivo
Allegro con spirito

Joel Cormier, marimba
Student concerto competition winner

- INTERMISSION -

Pyotr Tchaikovsky
1840-1893

Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36
Andante sostenuto - Moderato con anima
Andante in modo di canzona
Scherzo (Pizzicato ostinato: Allegro)
Finale: Allegro con fuoco



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PROGRAM NOTES

Gui-Chun for Orchestra

JACKIE SHIN

Jackie Kyung Ah Shin was born in Korea and immigrated to Canada. She is a doctorate student studying composition with Chan Ka Nin and orchestral conducting with Raffi Armenian at the University of Toronto Faculty of Music.

She has a great passion especially for the contemporary music repertoire. She has presented her music at regional and international workshops and concerts. Her music has been workshopped and performed in Canada, the U.S., Korea, Holland, Germany, Sweden and Latvia by numerous chamber ensembles and orchestras.

"Human beings live in various ways, and finally they have one destination - death. However, I do not consider death as the end of life. It is the beginning of a new life in heaven. Therefore, to me, the meaning of death is hope or redemption rather than fear or despair.

In Korean, *Gui-Chun* means returning to heaven: *Gui* means return, *Chun* means sky, or heaven. Actually, I borrowed the title from the poem written by the famous poet Sang-Byung Chun.

In this piece, I tried to express a person's desire to return to heaven, and his various experiences throughout his life.

This piece consists of five sections in an arch form. Each section has its own subject: Start of a life's voyage, Desire and Dream, Chaos, Nostalgia, and Hope.

These five subjects are expressed through the contrasts between slow and fast tempos, static and kinetic motions, high and low register and loud and soft dynamics. In structure, the third section, Chaos, acts as an axis of the piece. The first and second sections are symmetrical with the fourth and fifth sections.

I dedicate this piece to my dear friend Dewi Minden and Mulvenna family to whom I owe so much love and support."

— notes by the composer

"Gui Chun" by Sang-Byung Chun

I'll go back to heaven again.

Hand in hand with the dew

that melts at a touch of the dawning day,

I'll go back to heaven again.

With the dusk, together, just we two,

At a sign from a cloud after playing on the slopes

I'll go back to heaven again.

At the end of my outing to this beautiful world

I'll go back and say. It was beautiful...

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Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra, Op. 34

ROBERT KURKA (1921-1957)

Following the 1959 premiere of Kurka's marimba concerto at Carnegie Hall in New York, the critics all seemed to agree on one thing: the piece had verve. "Lively and zestful," wrote the *Herald Tribune*; "tuneful and attractive" noted the *New York Times*; "alive, colourful, even poetic" declared the *World Telegram*. And the *New York Journal-American* explained why: "Mr. Kurka contributed one of the salient aspects of American music: syncopated rhythm in light-hearted melodic writing. This work is as native as the barn dance, full of spirit and genuinely attractive."

If the music itself sounded native, the solo instrument producing the sounds was a relative newcomer, but one that had quickly found a place in the burgeoning popular music scene in the United States. Introduced from Latin America as late as 1910, the marimba's construction was standardized by its early American manufacturers and soon became popular in vaudeville and other light entertainment. A highlight was the remarkable concert at Carnegie Hall featuring Clair Omar Musser and his 100-piece marimba band in 1935. But classical music composers mostly ignored the marimba until the mid-century, prompting the *Herald Tribune* to open its review of Kurka's concerto with tongue-in-cheek humour: "Concertos for Marimba are no more often encountered than pterodactyls in Times Square, but one of them turned up last night."

Composed in 1956, Kurka's was only the third major marimba concerto, after Paul Creston's and Darius Milhaud's in 1940 and 1947 respectively.

Written at the request of the percussion virtuoso Vida Chenoweth, Kurka watched her practice before starting to

compose. According to Chenoweth, the composer was fascinated to discover the instrument's "visual" technique (one critic was mesmerized by Chenoweth's skill in "moving back and forth with the ease and grace of a ballet dancer") and he set out to emphasize it in his concerto. The work opens with a quasi-sonata form *Allegro molto* that calls for an almost acrobatic display of virtuosity on the part of the soloist: the crossing double notes and wide abrupt leaps make it by far the most difficult of the three movements. The cadenza explores changing tempos and metres and exploits the instrument's dynamic extremes across its entire range. In the second movement, an *Adagio espressivo*, four-voice and widely spaced chords showcase the instrument's characteristic mellow sonority. The concluding *Allegro con spirito* has a jazz-like feel—the dotted rhythms are intended to be swung—that in the second part motors along with mainly single-note melodic lines.

Kurka, who studied with Darius Milhaud and Otto Luening but was primarily self-taught, was already an accomplished American composer at the time of his premature death of leukemia at the age of 35. Best known today for his orchestral suite *The Good Soldier Schweik* (1956) that he later developed into an opera, he also composed two symphonies, five string quartets, several sonatas and concertos.

Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36 PYOTR TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

"Of course my symphony is programmatic but the programme is such that it cannot possibly be formulated in words," wrote Tchaikovsky to his student Taneyev who considered the programmatic aspect of his teacher's Fourth symphony to be a failing. Although Tchaikovsky did not leave a

formal programme, in a letter written after the 1878 premiere in Moscow, he did divulge one to his friend and patron, the wealthy widow and music lover, Nadezhda von Meck.

Tchaikovsky's programme, however, is not literal as is, for instance, Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, where a hero is marched off to the scaffold. Relating his programmatic music instead to the tradition of Beethoven's Fifth and Ninth symphonies, the Soviet musicologist and critic Daniel Zhitomirsky remarked that although Tchaikovsky's "leading ideas are unfolded through a series of concrete, full-blooded images of universal meaning," that "another outstanding characteristic is its power of generalization."

It is this type of psychologically generalized programme that Tchaikovsky describes in his letter to von Meck. The opening *Andante sostenuto* fanfare is Fate, "that inexorable force which prevents our aspirations to happiness from reaching their goal." The entrance of the violins and cellos launches the *Moderato con anima*; the unstable melody, derived from the Fate motif, signifies that the "joyless, hopeless feeling becomes ever more powerful and fierce." The arrival of a charming waltz-like second theme in the clarinet is Joy itself: "There is at last a sweet and tender dream appearing!" When the first unstable theme appears in a more cheerful setting, the composer exclaims, "How lovely! And how remote the obsessive first allegro theme now sounds!" But Fate interrupts this pleasant dream. "So life is a constant alternation between grim reality and evanescent visions and dreams of happiness."

The second movement, an *Andante in modo di canzona*, is a song without words that expresses the melancholy associated with regret: "One regrets the passing of time yet there is no wish to begin life anew." The *Scherzo, Pizzicato ostinato: Allegro* opens and closes with strumming-like string pizzicato that suggests "elusive images which flash across one's imagination when one has had a little wine to drink and is in the first stage of intoxication"—images of rowdy peasants and a street song. "Then somewhere in the distance a military parade goes by."

The folksong inspired *Finale: Allegro con fuoco* sums up the entire symphony. "If you find no cause for joy in yourself, look at others. Go amongst the common people and see how they know how to enjoy themselves, abandoning themselves completely to feelings of joy," writes Tchaikovsky. Fate reappears but the people ignore it: "They do not even turn round, they do not glance at you, and they have not noticed that you are lonely and sad." The rousing conclusion asks this of the listener: "Blame yourself and do not say that all the world is sad. There are simple but potent pleasures. Enjoy other people's happiness. One can live despite everything."

Shostakovich, an admirer of the great Russian master, did not believe, as some have suggested, that Tchaikovsky's music expresses a resignation to fate: "His most tragic works are permeated with the spirit of struggle, the striving to overcome the blind elemental forces."

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Robert Rival is a doctoral candidate in composition in the Faculty of Music

BIOGRAPHIES

Maestro **Raffi Armenian** graduated from the piano performance class of Bruno Seidlhofer at the Academy of Music in Vienna, Austria. He further studied at Imperial College, University of London, England, before completing his studies at the Vienna Academy of Music with Hans Swarowsky (orchestral conducting), Rheinhold Schmid (choral conducting) and Alfred Uhl (composition). He also took private voice lessons with Ferdinand Grossmann.

In 1969 Raffi Armenian immigrated to Canada, where he became Artistic Director of the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony for 22 years. The Raffi Armenian Theatre in Kitchener, which he helped to design, is considered one of the best performance spaces in North America, both for its acoustics and its design features. In 1974, as Music Director of the Stratford Festival, he

founded the Canadian Chamber Ensemble, which achieved international recognition with tours in North and South America, and Europe.

Raffi Armenian has guest conducted all of the major orchestras in Canada, as well as in Belgium, Italy, the United States, and the Jeunesses Musicales World Youth Orchestra. Equally at home on the operatic podium, he has conducted productions in Toronto, Montreal, Detroit, Columbus and Indiana, in a vast repertoire, including Berg's *Wozzeck* for the Canadian Opera Company, Toronto, and Stravinsky's *Rake's Progress*. From 1982 to 1985 he was Artistic Director of the Opera Studio of Opera de Montreal. In 1989, he conducted the final public appearance of the great Canadian tenor Jon Vickers, in a concert performance of Wagner's *Parsifal*. In March 2006, he will lead the

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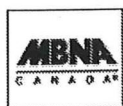
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Raffi Armenian's work has received countless honors including the Canadian Grand Prix du Disque for *Serenades*, and an Emmy Award nomination for the TV performance of Menotti's *The Medium* starring Maureen Forrester. Woody Allen used his CD *Music from Berlin in the 1920s* as background music for his film *Shadows and Fog*. He is a recipient of Honorary Doctorates from the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University, and the Golden Jubilee Medal of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. In 1989 he was invested into the Order of Canada.

Raffi Armenian has long been active as a pedagogue. In 1982 he became a Professor of the Orchestral Conducting Class at the Conservatoire de Musique in Montreal, a position he continues to hold. In 1997 he accepted a two-year post as Visiting Guest Professor at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, in Graz, Austria, and since September 1999 Mr. Armenian has been Director of Orchestral Studies at the

University of Toronto. In February 2006, Mr. Armenian will lead the Montreal Conservatoire Orchestra and the U of T Symphony Orchestra in two joint concerts in Montreal and Toronto.

Joel Cormier completed his Bachelor's degree in music performance at the Université of Moncton, where he studied with Michel Deschenes. He has played with the New Brunswick Symphony Orchestra, as well as with the New Brunswick Winds Orchestra. In 2004, he was awarded the Star of the Festival Award in the New Brunswick Competitive Festival of Music. He also played with the New Brunswick Youth Orchestra, performing in Carnegie Hall in the summer of 2004. In April 2004, Radio-Canada taped his graduation recital, as part of the Jeunes Artistes program, which was aired in November 2005. Joel currently plays with the Toronto Wind Orchestra. Joel is currently completing his Master in Music Performance where he is studying with Russell Hartenberger, Beverley Johnston, and John Rudolph.



*Upcoming concert featuring the University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra
with l'Orchestre Symphonique du Conservatoire de musique de Montreal*

Stravinsky: *Sacre du Printemps*
Shostakovich: *Symphony No. 10*
Saturday, February 4

7:30 pm. MacMillan Theatre. \$17, \$9 senior/student

This program will be performed and recorded for broadcast in Montreal on February 6

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Allene Chomyn
Sarah Davidson-Gurney
Jennifer Duke
Eun A Jo
Mark Johnston
Aleksandra Labinska
Luri Lee
Michelle Lee
Jane Levitt
Elizabeth Loewen
Kenin McKay
Markus Medri
Takayo Noguchi
Livia Papadimitri

Violin II

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Maia Broido
Tanya Charles
Mohamed-Aly Farag
Daniel Eric Harley
Christopher Jones
Grace Kim
Joyce Kim
Sharon Lee, *principal*
Aviva Lufer
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Callum Jennings
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Callum MacLeod
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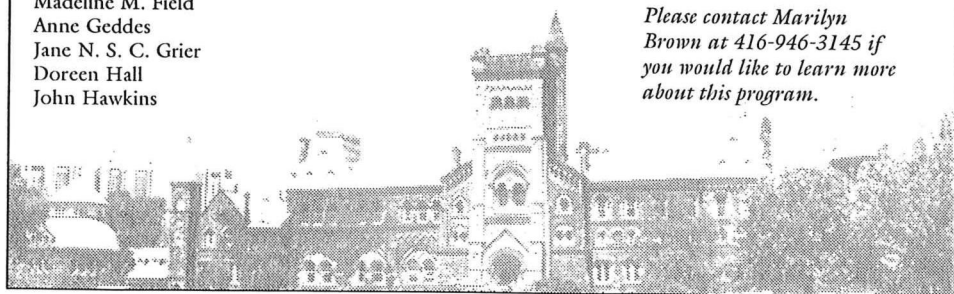
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